

ANTHROPOLOGY 410N

## THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THINGS

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*Office Hours: Monday 8-10 or by appointment*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In this course we will explore recent anthropological approaches to popular culture, material culture and consumption. We will focus on movies and television, and food and shopping, with examples drawn from U.S. society and elsewhere, and a special interest in the relationship among material objects, memory and identity. Students will conduct several research projects in the Carbondale area and write research papers presenting their results.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** To raise awareness of anthropology's applicability to U.S. society. To teach students the methods and objectives of in-depth fieldwork projects.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

\*All reading on the syllabus is required, and should be done before the class for which it is assigned

\*There will be several short reaction papers scattered throughout the semester

\*Class Attendance is Required, as is class participation, and will be counted toward 5% of your grade.

\*There will be one mid-term exam.

\*There will be three major papers required for this course, each based on integrating readings with fieldwork conducted locally.

### **REQUIRED BOOKS**

Deborah Barndt *Tangled Routes: Women, Work and Globalization on the Tomato Trail*

David Sutton *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*

K. Ekstrom & H. Brembeck *Elusive Consumption*.

## TOPICS

Week 1: INTRO

Terri Kapsalis “Making Babies the American Girl Way”

The film *Barbie Nation* will be shown

Weeks 2-3: Material Culture and the Meaning of Objects

Reading:

Annette Weiner “The Density of Objects”

Brian Pfaffenberger “Worlds in the Making”

Naomi Klein “Alt.Everything: The Youth Market and the Marketing of Cool”

Daniel Miller “Alienable Gifts and Inalienable Commodities”

C. Curasi, E. Arnould and L Price “Ritual Desire and Ritual Development”

Christopher Hoffman “Intentional Damage as Technological Agency”

Week 4: Making Things: The Anthropology of Skill

Tim Ingold “Work, Time and Industry”

Tim Ingold “Society, Nature and the Concept of Technology

Terry Childs :”After all, a Hoe bought a Wife!”

Charles Keller

Weeks 5-6: Tracing Commodity Chains: Production, Exchange and Consumption

Deborah Barndt *Tangled Routes: Women, Work and Globalization on the Tomato Trail*

The films *Isle of Flowers* and *Java Jive* will be shown  
**First Paper due week 6**

Weeks 7-8: Tasting the Object; Food, Memory and the Senses

David Sutton *Remembrance of Repasts*

Weeks 9-11: Shopping for Identities, or What is Consumption, Anyway?

**Midterm Exam, week 9**

Mary Douglas “In Defense of Shopping”

Thomas Hines *I Want That* Chs. 1-3

K. Ekstrom & H. Brembeck *Elusive Consumption*

The film *Stu Leonard's* will be shown

**2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Due week 11**

Week 12: Not that there's anything wrong with that: The Anthropology of Seinfeld

Vincent Brook “From the Cozy to the Carceral: Transformations of Ethnic Space in *The Goldbergs* and *Seinfeld*.”

Zygmunt Baumann “A Catalogue of Postmodern Fears”

Weeks 13-14: Anthropology Goes to the Movies

David Sutton & Peter Wogan “The Gun, The Pen and the Cannoli”

Lee Drummond *American Dreamtime* (Selected Chapters Available on the Web)

Week 15: Class Presentations